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THE OPPORTUNITY OF THE TEACHER.

A STATEMENT, which recently appeared in print, to the effect that the term "cooking" has given place in popular usage to "domestic science," conveys a world of meaning whose full force should be more generally understood, particularly by those who intend to become special teachers.

There are two points which should be made perfectly clear at the outset: first, cooking is not "domestic science," no matter what pretensions may be made by those who plead for its introduction into courses of study; second, teachers must understand the distinction between the two terms before undertaking to prepare themselves for the work.

The confusion in terms is the source of much misunderstanding where courses of study are under discussion, and to it may be traced much of the disagreement which exists as to the fitness of the subject for introduction into the school curriculum.

The number of taxpayers, and even of friends of the public-school system, is still large who are ready to assent to the notion that the preparation of food according to fixed recipes—in other words, "cooking" reduced to its simplest terms—is a subject which the schools should teach. It is their idea that little girls could thus be made much more useful at home, and would be better poor men's wives; and some even go so far as to look upon this kind of instruction as the only available way of solving the domestic-service problem. There is a correspondingly large number of women who, having failed in some vocation, or coming face to face suddenly with the necessity of earning their own livelihood, think that, by brushing up their memory of the way their mothers used to cook and by careful use of a cook-book, they will become competent teachers of "domestic science." But, no matter what the practical man of affairs may think of it or what the zealous charity worker may hope from it as a means of uplifting family life among the poor, the idea makes no real progress, and, in fact, in almost every community where it has

been put in practice, has utterly failed. Mothers who teach their daughters cooking at home demand that the time in school shall be spent to better advantage. Mothers who look upon cooking as a menial occupation—and there are, unfortunately, many of them—are not willing to have their little girls degraded in such a fashion. Accordingly, the old-fashioned notion of cooking as a mechanical process is extinct in so far as it touches any modern system of education. And with it must of necessity disappear the class of women who would enter upon the teaching of cooking as a makeshift and without any serious preliminary training.

It may be granted, then, that cooking in itself has no place in the schools; neither has carpentry. Cook and carpenter alike must give up any claim that their technical skill fits them for the duties of a teacher.

Is the situation bettered by using the larger and more pretentious term “domestic science”? By no means, unless a change is made in subject-matter and method. Carpentry as a trade is no more entitled to recognition when it is termed “manual training.” There must be a more vital change than that of name merely.

The question then arises: What is the real “domestic science” in which so many good people are interested, and for which so much practical use and educational value are claimed? It is easier to say what it is not than what it is. In the first place, it is not cooking, nor is it sewing. In the second place, it is not, as some English authorities have assumed, such principles of physics and chemistry as may be applied or adapted to household needs and activities. In so far as the term may be justified at all, it is the combination of both ideas, or the application of the fundamental principles of different branches of science to different household activities, such as cooking and sewing. But this is not all. Such instruction, to be worthy of any place in a school system, must be given in such a way as to develop to the fullest possible extent all of the child’s powers and enable him to be master of himself and his environment. It is not enough that the child shall be able to make light and palatable baking-powder biscuit; nor, on the other hand, does it suffice for him to know about

the expansion of gases or the reaction of chemicals. He must have his interest aroused in the larger aspects of his activity.

The meaning of these suggestions and the real end to be sought can be brought out more fully by describing briefly the qualifications, natural and acquired, which the teacher should possess, and whose importance she should keep constantly in mind.

It is difficult to draw a hard and fast line between those qualifications which are natural and those which are acquired, and it is not worth while to make the attempt. It may be clearly seen, however, that unless the teacher has certain physical, mental, and moral characteristics on which the special technical training can be based, her path to success will be a devious one, and she will often fail to reach the goal. A complete analysis is not necessary. A rapid survey of the most important traits will serve the present purpose.

First, there must be due appreciation of the value of order and system as time-savers. "A place for everything and everything in its place" suggests a method of activity which leads to quick results. Too often, unfortunately, it suggests also a method where the system rather than the result is given the first place. There must be an understanding of the distinction between the essential and the nonessential, the real and the trivial, in order and system. The teacher must show in all her activities that she works through system to result.

Closely allied with this trait is a fine sense of neatness and cleanliness. Here, too, it is not the thing itself that is the end in view, but the result which can be reached only by this means. Not only do these qualities contribute largely to the maintenance of physical health and sanitary conditions, but they are important factors in securing satisfactory results in the different household activities. The real significance of cleanliness has been learned by the managers of great industrial processes which have to do with the preparation of food supplies, but its function as a saver of time, money, and effort in the household is not yet fully appreciated. The teacher, then, should not attempt to do her work without at the same time maintaining high standards of cleanliness for herself and her pupil.

Another important quality, and one that is too frequently ignored, is the æsthetic sense. How often a thing fails to be adequately done because it has no element of beauty in it! And when we see a person with the gift of introducing a touch of beauty into the most commonplace activity, how the whole meaning of an act is suddenly revealed! This point needs special emphasis in these days when the so-called "practical" value of things has led to ignoring in large measure finer and higher tests. How to combine the useful with the beautiful is the problem which every teacher should be impelled by her own personal needs to help solve.

Manual dexterity, or facility in the use of the hands, is a quality which must be acquired, if it is not natural. Every motion made by the teacher should serve a definite end. The child should see that the body can be the skilful servant of the mind. Aimless movements and nervous gestures are as much out of place as awkwardness. Many a kitchen is wrecked on the Scylla of clumsiness, but the Charybdis of ineffective stir and pottering is almost as dangerous.

Another trait, or possibly it should be called an attitude of mind, which is of importance, is joy in doing. Mastery over the natural world, bending natural forces to the accomplishment of a purpose, power of self-expression through work—these are motives which lighten drudgery and give little place for the "menial" service, even if they do not make them entirely vanish. The teacher who is not willing to turn her hand to anything, who must have a subordinate to wash up the dishes or scrub the sinks because it is beneath her dignity to do it, fails to enter upon her task in the right spirit. Unless her pupils see that she has help merely because of the pressure of her other work, she will also fail to teach that lesson which nearly every American child most needs, and often misses, in home life—respect for honest work.

These traits, while more or less a gift of nature, may be largely cultivated and developed. The teacher should watch herself and supplement any natural deficiency by conscientious training.

Another desirable trait is the domestic instinct, taken in its

large sense. This is a fondness for the arts which contribute to the welfare of the family, a sense of satisfaction in the promotion of household comfort, a joy in realizing that the home is the center and source of the best influences of society. Domesticity is too often taken to mean a certain stupid and stupefying following of a round of household duties, a slavery to the inanimate world, a blindness to interests outside the home. When this is the case, it is not strange that it does not prove attractive to girls of brain power and executive ability, nor hold women of tried efficiency. The time has come when, in addition to the willingness to use the home as a channel for the expression of all the highest powers, there shall be study and attention given to the real significance of family and domestic life. The day has passed when a woman may be made to feel that if she uses a wornout stocking for a scrubbing cloth instead of darning it, or buys a loaf of bread instead of using the last of the limited store of strength to make it at home, she is guilty of undermining the foundations of human society.

This leads further to a study of the social, economic, and historic forces which affect the home and its place in society. It may be true that there is the possibility of becoming lost in vague generalities, and losing sight of the practical details which make up the daily round of domestic activity, just as it is possible to be so absorbed in the mechanical performance of household duties as to fail to see their significance and fulfil them with a sense of proportion or a right standard of values; but the latter is an error more frequently made, as well as a delusion often ranked as a virtue. There is very little danger that the teacher who is to bring the activities of the home into line with the general march of human progress will have too wide a knowledge of the lessons of history, the teachings of economics, or the programs of students of society.

Finally, the teacher must give herself the best possible training in those sciences which contribute to the sum of knowledge needed in the administration of the household or the control of its activities. Chemistry, physics, botany, physiology, bacteriology, are all sciences which find their highest and best expression in house-

hold life. No learning comes amiss. Many of the simplest processes of the household are still not fully understood, and the progressive teacher and housekeeper must keep herself in the closest possible touch with all the advances of science.

This survey of the needed qualifications of the teacher is not intended to strike terror into the hearts of all who are looking forward to entering this field of service, nor yet to induce those who have already started on their preparation to turn back. Its real purpose is far different. It should arouse fresh enthusiasm, new courage, and untiring effort to prove worthy of a work which offers such boundless opportunities for personal attainment and social service.

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